We claim:

1. A method for preparing a last useful for producing custom footwear, comprising the steps of:

applying a compliant liner element having a smooth continuous inner surface over a foot for which the footware is intended;

applying a pliable hardenable resin carrying sock structure over the liner element, and confirming said sock structure and liner element to the foot;

hardening the sock structure to a rigid form;

removing the hardened sock structure and liner from the foot to thereby leave an inner mold cavity of the sock structure defining a negative impression of the foot with the smooth, continuous inner surface of the liner element forming the inner surface of the mold cavity;

placing a settable last forming material in the mold cavity and permitting the last forming material to set and harden; and

removing the sock structure from the hardened last forming material so that the last forming material corresponds with a positive impression of the mold cavity and includes a smooth outer surface.

2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of applying core spacer elements at predetermined regions of the foot prior to application of the liner element.

3. The method according to claim 2, further comprising applying an inner stocking over the foot prior to the application of the liner element, with the core spacer elements being attached to the inner stocking.

4. The method according to claim 2, wherein the core spacer elements are applied to the toe and dorsal regions of the foot.

5. The method according to claim 2, including forming the core spacer elements so they are compliant with the form of the underlying foot.

6. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of dividing portions of the hardened sock structure and spreading apart the divided portions to enable removal of the hardened sock structure from a foot.

7. The method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of rejoining the divided portions upon removal of the hardened sock structure from a foot to restore the integrity and form of the mold cavity.

8. The method according to claim 1, wherein the last forming material comprises a curable polymer.

9. The method according to claim 1, wherein the sock structure is a porous substrate impregnated with a curable resin.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the sock structure substrate is a textile formed of glass or polyester fibers.

11. The method according to claim 1, wherein the compliant liner element and the sock structure are applied together as an integrated assembly on the foot.

12. The method according to claim 1, wherein the compliant liner element comprises an elastomeric material, and wherein the smooth continuous inner surface comprises a silicone layer.

13. A kit for preparing a last for producing footwear, comprising:

a sock structure carrying an activatable hardenable compound, said sock structure and compound adapted to be conformed to a foot for which the footware is intended and to be activated to a hardened sock structure;

a compliant flexible liner having a smooth continuous inner surface adapted to be conformed to a foot and to be positioned as an intermediate layer between a foot and the sock structure; and

a pourable and settable last forming material suitable for forming a last when set and hardened.

14. The kit according to claim 13, wherein the liner and sock structure are integrated into a unitary sock structure, the liner defining an internal surface of the unitary sock structure.

15. The kit according to claim 13, further comprising compliant core spacer elements configured to be positioned at predetermined regions of a foot.

16. The kit according to claim 13, further comprising an inner stocking member suitable to protect skin from core spacers and elements of the sock and liner.

17. The kit according to claim 16, wherein the core spacer elements on the inner stocking correspond at least to toe and dorsal regions of a foot.

18. The kit according to claim 13, wherein the settable last forming material comprises polyurethane.

19. The kit according to claim 13, wherein the sock structure comprises a glass fiber textile.

20. The kit according to claim 19, wherein the sock structure comprises elastomeric fibers woven into the glass fiber textile.

21. The kit according to claim 13, wherein the liner comprises an elastomeric textile coated on its inner surface with a continuous, smooth layer of silicone.